

By Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23)

On the border of my Congressional District in Texas the Rio Grande twists and turns, floods and dries out, and generally moves for 785 miles with the water flowing eastward toward the Gulf of Mexico. Along our district's border and the rest of the border our country shares with Mexico, the drug cartels are twisting and turning to do whatever they can in order to get drugs in to the hands of the Americans who are paying for them and that includes smuggling an iron river of over 10,000 American guns in to the hands of the drug cartels in only 2007 and 2008. So how do we stop it?

This week I returned from accompanying President Obama to Mexico in order to keep open and expand our dialogue with Mexico and its leader President Calderon, and I think we will succeed in doing so. I was encouraged to see that the President continued to focus on ways to stop gun trafficking while we were there.

Mexico, as I often tell my colleagues who are not as familiar with the border as we are in Texas, is most important to Texas because Mexico is Texas' number one trading partner and is a major reason we have not fared as poorly as many other states during the economic downturn. So it's important that we create a safe and secure border that allows for continued trade to prosper and for our countries to work together.

Knowing full well that we'd like Mexico to continue being our number one trading partner I recently introduced a bill that I gave to the President before he invited me to visit Mexico with him. HR 1448, the Border Reinforcement and Violence Reduction Act, would help us put a halt to continuing drug cartel fueled violence along the border by increasing funding for several existing law enforcement programs for a period of two years with \$379 million to crack down on gun smuggling with more resources like a plan to inspect Southbound cargo that would help intercept a number of the guns that are going across the border illegally.

I believe that all responsible gun owners should be able to purchase and use their guns as our second amendment so clearly allows. But those that seek to purchase guns and illegally hand them to drug cartels who may harm our law enforcement with armor piercing bullets should and will be stopped.

Though virtually no “spillover” violence has occurred on American soil from the wars between drug cartels, and we don’t expect it to, we should work to ensure that a relationship hundreds of years in the making is not ensnared by ceaseless, pointless violence and as I explained to the Presidents of both countries, the first step to maintaining that relationship is to crack down on the illegal guns coming from here.

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